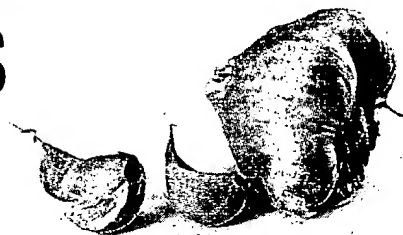


Handy gadgets for \$30 or less



DEVICES TO MAKE SHORTER, EASIER WORK OF PEELING, GRATING, BAKING, AND OTHER CULINARY TASKS.

Kitchen stores and catalogs overflow with devices that promise to simplify virtually every food-preparation task. But are they worth the money—and the space they take up in a drawer or cupboard?

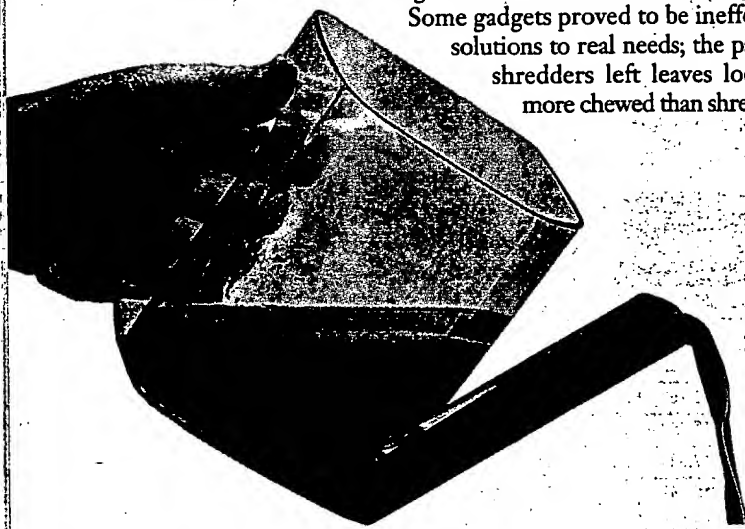
December is a time for heavy-duty cooking (and looking for gifts for cooks). We brought cooking gadgets of every shape and description to our labs. As our testing progressed, we decided some tools were too specialized for most kitchens; it's unlikely, for instance, that many cooks pit enough olives or cherries to invest in a pitter.

Some gadgets proved to be ineffective solutions to real needs; the parsley shredders left leaves looking more chewed than shredded.

We dismissed some tools as plain silly—like a battery-operated cheese grater with a built-in flashlight. (Not only was it gimmicky, but it wasn't a very good grater.)

When our testing showed that a device worked well, we continued testing, comparing gadgets of the same type against one another and evaluating durability. After lots of chopping, peeling, grating, roasting, baking, and more, the selection of items eventually narrowed to those we cover on these pages. All but the bakeware liners, pepper mill, and meat thermometer can be cleaned in the dishwasher.

The gadgets are sold in specialty stores such as Bed Bath & Beyond and Lechters or through catalogs. For each item, we provide a phone number for the manufacturer or a mail-order source. (Prices do not include shipping and handling.)



▲ Sturdy fat separator

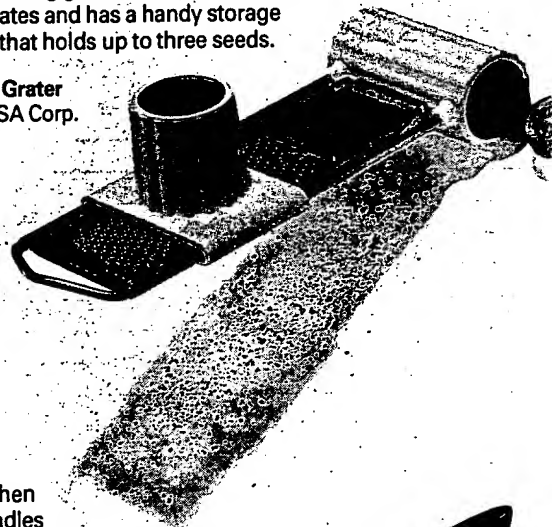
The *Pedrini* gravy separator is a quick and easy way to get the fat out of soups and sauces for healthier cooking. When you pour the hot liquid into the separator, the fat rises to the top in a matter of minutes. You pour the defatted liquid out of the separator through its spout. We compared the *Pedrini* with other fat-separating devices, including basters and ladle-type skimmers, and found it faster, easier, and more effective. And compared with the other "watering can" separators we tested, the *Pedrini* was the only one to survive our durability tests, which included temperature extremes and a fall from a countertop to our laboratory floor. It holds about four cups of liquid, so you may have to separate soups and stocks in several batches.

Pedrini Gravy Separator
• \$13 • model number 5303
• Pedrini USA • 516 472-4501

▼ Grating nutmeg

This unique nutmeg grater both protects your fingers as it grates and has a handy storage compartment that holds up to three seeds.

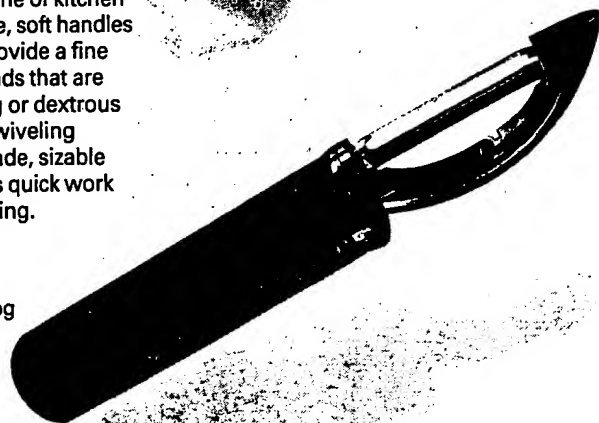
Zyliss Nutmeg Grater
• \$14 • Zyliss USA Corp.
• 888 794-7623



▼ Easy peeling

The *Good Grips* line of kitchen devices have large, soft handles that do indeed provide a fine grip, even for hands that are wet or less strong or dextrous than most. The swiveling stainless-steel blade, sizable and sharp, makes quick work of vegetable peeling.

Oxo Good Grips Swivel Peeler
• \$7 • Chef's Catalog number 1222
• 800 338-3232



▼ Double-duty salad spinners

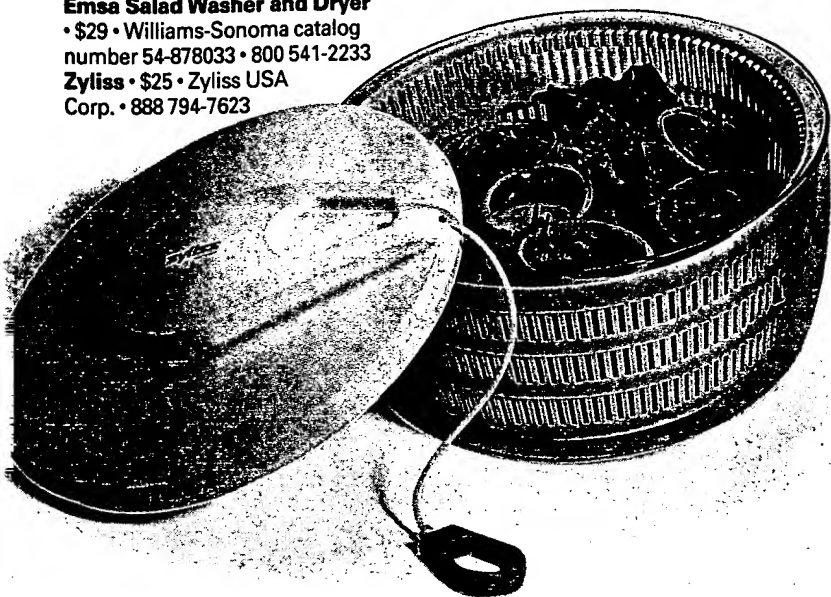
Two salad spinners operated more smoothly and extracted more water from the greens than others we tested. The *Emsa* is a washer and dryer in one. When the greens are in the basket and the lid is secured, you place the spinner under the kitchen faucet and allow water to flow in through a hole in the lid and out through the bottom of the bowl. You spin the basket slowly to make sure water rinses through all the greens. Then, a sharp tug on the cord spins the basket vigorously to dry the greens. With the *Zyliss* (shown), you rinse the greens in the kitchen sink or immerse them in the bowl, then dry them in the spinner. The plastic bowl can be used to serve the salad, too.

Emsa Salad Washer and Dryer

• \$29 • Williams-Sonoma catalog number 54-878033 • 800 541-2233

Zyliss • \$25 • Zyliss USA

Corp. • 888 794-7623

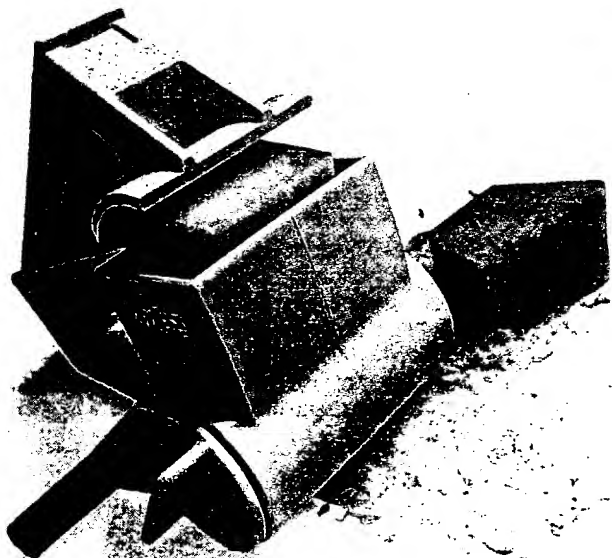


▼ Smooth and sturdy cheese grater

This is a faster and less messy tool than a simple flat or box grater when you need to grate Parmesan or other hard cheeses. The grater works smoothly: In our tests, its sharp, stainless-steel grating drum cut through the hard cheese without stalling, as some rotary graters did. The *Zyliss* is compact, substantial, and easy to assemble and take apart. Our one criticism: It's designed for right-handed users.

Zyliss Cheese Grater

• \$18 • Zyliss USA Corp. • 888 794-7623



▲ Clean-fingers garlic peeler

You can peel garlic the hard way, with a paring knife. Or you can smash cloves with the side of a heavy knife, the way professional chefs do the job, which leaves you picking out the thin bits of skin from the garlic. With the *E-Z-Rol*, you simply put a clove of garlic in the tube, place the tube on a countertop, press down hard, and roll it with your hand. When you hear a sharp crack, the clove is peeled, intact, and ready for slicing. The garlic oil makes the papery skin stick to the inside of the tube, so if you're doing lots of cloves, you have to rinse and dry the tube frequently. It's still the best way we've found to peel garlic.

E-Z-Rol Garlic Peeler by Elan

• \$8 • Williams-Sonoma catalog number 53-984302 • 800 541-2233



▲ Quick corer for tomatoes and strawberries

Here's a quick and effective device for removing stems from tomatoes or strawberries. It's good at removing seeds from cucumbers, too.

Tomato Core-It

• \$2 • model number 953 • Prince Castle Inc. • 800 722-7853

▲ Nonstick bakeware liners

These durable, removable sheets instantly make any bakeware, from roasting pans to baking sheets, nonstick. When we made 1700 oatmeal cookies on the two liners we bought, the sheets became a bit wrinkled, but their nonstick finish was as slippery with the last batch of cookies as with the first. The liners can't go in the dishwasher, but they're easy to wash in the sink.

Teflon Bakeware Liners

• Two 11x17-inch sheets, \$11; also available in other sizes • Dupont • 800 986-2857

▼ Pepper as you cook

You might not want this quirky-looking gadget on a formal dining table, but its one-handed operation is a decided advantage in the kitchen. You simply squeeze the two rabbit-ear handles to dispense ground pepper. The mill worked easily and smoothly; a dial on the bottom offers fine to very coarse settings. The clear plastic casing lets you see at a glance when the supply of peppercorns is low. We had problems with a sticky fill door on some samples; if you do, return the grinder for a replacement.

Chef'N The Pepper Ball

• \$19 • Chef's Catalog number 5330 • 800 338-3232

► Flexible cutting mats

These thin plastic cutting mats are inexpensive, take little space, and effectively protect countertops when you're doing light chopping and cutting. They're a convenient way to keep a separate cutting surface just for raw chicken, say, to prevent bacterial contamination of other foods. They're lightweight, easy to store, and bend into a funnel shape to pour chopped foods into a bowl or cooking pot.

Chop & Chop Flexible Cutting Mat

• \$2-\$6, depending on size
• New Age Products • 800 886-2467

▲ Superior strainers

Many strainers are flimsy, hard to use, or too coarse for such jobs as straining sauces and gravies. These Italian-made models have mesh so fine, we found it could trap particles as small as ground pepper. The conical shape makes it particularly easy to direct liquid into a saucepan or bowl. The strainers are smaller versions of the type professional cooks use, and they're just as well made and nicely finished.

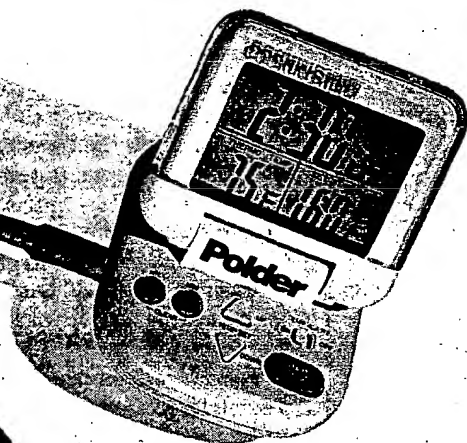
Piazza Fine Strainers

• 5½ inch, \$17; 7½ inch, \$25 • also available in other sizes • Zabar's • 800 697-6301

▼ Roasting perfected

This useful thermometer allows you to continuously monitor the internal temperature of meat or poultry, without opening the oven door and disrupting the cooking temperature. You insert the thermometer's probe into the food and close the oven door over the probe's long cord. The cord plugs into the thermometer, which sits on the stovetop (a magnet keeps it in place). You can set the device so it sounds a loud alarm when the roast reaches the desired temperature. (We had perfect roasts every time.) You can also use it as an ordinary countdown timer. The display is large and easy to read.

Polder Cooking Thermometer/Timer
 • \$30 • model number 362 • Polder Inc.
 • 800 431-2133, ext. 245



▼ The spatula spoon

The *Spoon Spatula* is substantial enough to work through thick batters and flexible enough to scrape bowls clean. The spoon shape helps scoop batter out of the bowl.

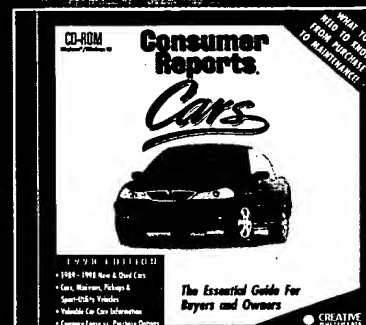
Rubbermaid Spoon Spatula
 • \$3, model number 1935;
 \$2, model number 1936
 • Rubbermaid • 330 264-7645



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